GOD HELP US
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ACT ONE
Scene One

(Open to a WHITE STAGE doused in a bright, but soft, WHITE LIGHT. A CNN-style PRAYER TICKER scrolls across the back wall. Interspersed among the scrolling prayers are requests for God's help resolving larger issues – bringing peace to Middle East, ending hunger, etc. – but most are requests for personal favors. There is a small LAPTOP on top of a WHITE DESK; two WHITE CHAIRS sit perpendicular to the audience. ENTER SAINT PETER, clad in a WHITE ROBE flecked with red spots. He RUSHES IN with a PLATE OF NACHOS AND a BOWL of SALSA. He makes space for the PLATE and BOWL and gives everything a quick once-over with a rag. O/S we hear the heavy, methodic pounding of GOD'S footsteps.)

GOD

Fe, fi, fo fum!

(GOD ENTERS, in full coloring-book glory: flowing WHITE LOCKS with matching BEARDand a regal WHITE ROBE, cinched at the waist by a thick GOLDEN ROPE. SAINT PETER wheels around toward GOD and kneels.)

Psych! I'm just playin', Pete. Up, up, up. C'mere and give a creator a hug!

(SAINT PETER rises and give GOD a timid hug, barely wrapping his arms around GOD's shoulders.)

You never were much a hugger, were you, P? That's cool. Whatever.

(GOD takes a step back and twirls around.)

So?

SAINT PETER

So.

GOD

Notice anything different?

SAINT PETER

I'm sorry, Your Holiness, I don't –

GOD

Haircut! Haricut! I got my haircut. Geez, you're supposed to be my eyes and ears, Pete.

SAINT PETER

Sorry.

GOD

Ah, it's OK.

(beat)

Well?

SAINT PETER

Well?

GOD

Do you like it?! Geez, you're makin' me fish here, Pete.

SAINT PETER

Oh, yes, yes, yes. It's very nice. Very, uh, flattering.

GOD

It better be. Cost enough. Fat lot of good it did me with the Galactic Council. I tell you: this middle-management stuff is steaming shit in a paper bag. Do you have any idea what it's like to sit at a meeting and know that no one respects your opinion? To have every idea you toss around get tossed out? To have people talk right over you? I swear, I'm never gonna make it out of this two-bit galaxy.

(GOD lets out an exaggerated sigh)

Nevermind. No one wants to hear *god's* problems.

(beat)

This is the part where you're supposed to say, "Really?! I care! Tell me more!"

SAINT PETER

I'm sorry.

GOD

Forget it. I don't want to talk about work anymore. It's boring. What's been going on around here? How long was I gone for, anyway? Felt like a thousand years.

SAINT PETER

Two thousand, actually.

GOD

Two ? Man, those corner-office Council types never tire of climbing the mountaintop and chewing the scenery.

SAINT PETER

Yes, time does fly, Your Holiness.

GOD

"Holiness"! Manners! You're Old School, Pete. That's what I always liked about you.

SAINT PETER

I brought you nachos.

GOD

Oooh! Nachos! I'm famished.

(GOD rushes over to the table, sits, and like a rescued castaway, begins jamming fistful after fistful of chips into his mouth. He pauses only occasionally to dip the NACHOS into the SALSA – frequently double dipping. His hands and face quickly become a mess. The sight repulses SAINT PETER.)

GOD

Have a seat, Pete.

(SAINT PETER SITS, while GOD continues to feed his face.)

Mind if I meet and eat?

SAINT PETER

We are in your house, Your Holiness.

GOD

Always liked you, Pete. First time I saw you, I said, "Now there's a guy with a good head on his shoulders. Not like that John the Baptist nut job."

(GOD roars loudly at his own joke. SAINT PETER flashes a strained smile, pulls the CHAIR a few feet away from the desk, then sits. GOD dives back into his NACHOS. SAINT PETER, leans to avoid GOD's spittle. GOD finally leans back and sighs, then wipes his hands on SAINT PETER's ROBE again.)

Whew! Hosanna in the Highest! Not bad. Not bad at all! Who's the chef?

SAINT PETER

Mother Teresa.

GOD

Never heard of her.

SAINT PETER

Fairly new. She can lean on the holier-than-thou crutch a little once too often for my liking, but she certainly knows how to tame an oven.

GOD

So, I got your text. What's up? You've got fifteen. After that I gotta make like the Red Sea and split.

(GOD explodes in laughter. SAINT PETER can only muster a faint smile.)

SAINT PETER (*weakly*)

Yes, good one.

(GOD suppresses a few more chuckles.)

GOD

OK. Lay it on me, Pete. But seriously: make it lickety, 'cuz I gotta bounce. God's got places to be.

SAINT PETER

OK. Well –

GOD

Hold up. What's with all the heat? I'm sweating my Matzo Balls off.

SAINT PETER

Actually, that's one of the reasons I wanted to meet. It seems the people on the blue planet have failed to accept that their individual actions have a collective impact larger than themselves.

GOD

That's because they're morons.

SAINT PETER

Yes, we are all aware of your Eighty-Percent Asshole Rule, Your Holiness. However –

GOD

They're morons, Pete.

SAINT PETER

If we could just quickly go through my presentation, I think you'll see there are some larger issues on that planet that will require more direct –

GOD

I'm thirsty. Where's my Coke Zero Angel?

(GOD yells up to the HEAVENS)

Coke Zero!

(We hear the sound of a PHONE ringing)

You sure you like the hair?

(An ANSWERING MACHINE beeps, then the sultry voice of the COKE ZERO ANGEL.)

COKE ZERO ANGEL

Hi. You've reached the Coke Zero Network. We're so sorry we can't fulfill your immediate Coke Zero desires. But leave us a message, and we'll make sure your eternal Coke Zero fantasies come true. Bye, now.

(Another BEEP ends the call.)

GOD

What the hell's going on here? What kind of heaven is this when the boss can't get order up the eternal and everlasting elixir? There used to be a time, Pete. There used to be a time when I could snap my fingers – snap! Like that! – and so many angels across the heavens would flap their wings to serve me a cocktail there'd be a monsoon.

GOD (CONT'D)

Hell, I didn't even need to *ask*. All I'd have to do was *think* "drink", and saints by the ark-load would be tripping over themselves to slake my thirst with that carbonated Council juice. Now I get answering machines? W-T-F?

SAINT PETER

Yes, well, angels today: certainly not the greatest generation.

GOD

In my day, you'd get communicated with an 'X' for shit like this.

SAINT PETER

If we could just get on with my presentation, Your Holiness.

GOD (*brightens*)

Your Holiness.

(GOD musses up SAIT PETERS HAIR.)

All right. Show me whatcha got, pretty momma.

(SAINT PETER moves to the LAPTOP and turns it to face GOD.)

SAINT PETER

Now –

GOD

Wait.

SAINT PETER

Oh, good lord.

GOD

Isn't Elijah supposed to be in this meeting?

SAINT PETER

I texted him, but he never replied.

GOD

That son of a bitch is never on time.

SAINT PETER

I left the door open for him.

GOD

Forget him. Close the damn door. And lock it.

(SAINT PETER rises, closes the DOOR, sits back down.)

I'm gonna tell you something: I'm tired of this bullshit. There's gonna be some changes around here. Big-time changes.

(GOD INHALES deeply, then EXHALES loudly, directly into SAINT PETER's face. SAINT PETER turns away at the odor of GOD's TORTILLA-CHIP breath.)

GOD

All right. Let's take stock of the flock.

SAINT PETER

Now, I know things may look a little dicey at first, so I want to encourage you from jumping to any immediate conclusions.

GOD

P-Dog, please. How long have we known each other, huh? We've both tossed some pretty crazy shit-storm salads in our day, right? How bad can it be? Fire it up.

(SAINT PETER click-starts computer presentation, takes a few steps back.)

SAINT PETER

I've set it at god speed.

GOD

Fine, fine, fine. Damn, I'm thirsty.

(The presentation whizzes along at god speed. GOD scans the screen with disinterest at first, but his eyes widen until they nearly burst from their sockets.)

Whoa, whoa, whoa. What the fuck? What the fuck is this? These people put my name on all that? What the fuck is going on? I didn't sign off on any of that.

SAINT PETER

I know there are some distressing moments. . .

GOD

Distressing moments? What the 'F', P? This is the worst fucking place in the galaxy! I step out of the office for a big-bang blink, and these people hit every Deadly Sin in the book, and twice on Tuesdays! This is a calamity.

SAINT PETER

I know it looks bad. However –

GOD

"However" nothin'. You don't understand. I can't have this. There's already talk of demoting me to the piss-ant Wilman Galaxy. If news of trouble out here in the sticks leaks upstairs, they'll send me straight out to schlep rocks with Sisyphus until the cows get tired of mooing. This is no good. This is no good. What do we do? What do we do? Think, think.

SAINT PETER

May I suggest –?

GOD

Yes. No. Wait. OK. Hold on. Yes. Right. Here's what we do. We pull the plug on this rinky-dink planet. Whiz-bang. Now. Where the hell is Jesus?

(SAINT PETER doesn't answer)

Pete? Where the hell is Jesus?

SAINT PETER

Well, see, the thing is – the thing is – no one's quite sure where Jesus is.

GOD

No one's quite sure? What the hell does that mean? When's the last time anyone saw him?

SAINT PETER

Well, there was a sighting in a burrito in Mexico City, but that was a while ago.

GOD (*up to the CEILING*)

Calling Jesus!

(We hear a PHONE RING two or three times, then a voice on the other end: JESUS. His voice is nearly drowned out by the sounds of a raucous CROWD, as if JESUS is in a crowded bar.)

JESUS

Hello! This is Jesus! I aims to please-us!

GOD

Jesus, this is your father.

JESUS (*loudly*)

Who?

(aside)

Just water for me, thanks.

GOD (*yelling*)

The almighty father, damn it!

JESUS

Oh, pop. Hi, um, you're back. What do you know?

GOD

That's right. I'm back. I've got Peter here –

JESUS

Pete! How are the pearly's hangin'?

SAINT PETER

The pearly's are just fine. Everything is fine.

GOD

Peter here's been debriefing me on the festering sore Earth has become under your watch: war, disease, famine, crime, poverty, torture, genocide, Snookie!

(beat, JESUS doesn't answer)

Can you hear me? What's that music?

JESUS (*glumly*)

Mariachi.

GOD

You need to get back here, now! Am I crystal?

(There is silence, then a click.)

Hello? Hello? He hung up on me!

(*GOD yells back up to the CEILING.)*

Calling Jesus fucking Christ!

(We hear one PHONE RING, then the beep of JESUS' ANSWERING MACHINE.)

JESUS

'Yo. Jesus. Message. Beep.'

GOD

Oh-ho-ho! Now I am biblically pissed. It's incidences like this that send me boiling. See this right here? This is me boiling. I'm boiling huge.

(GOD STANDS and furiously scratches his beard)

God's beard's getting scratchy!

(to SAINT PETER)

My ass is on the fucking line here, P. I'm going to have to make a decision.

(GOD inhales and exhales deeply to try and steady himself)

What do you think? Typhoons? Earthquakes? Volcanoes? What? I could use a little help here, you know! Chime any time!

SAINT PETER

Well, Your Holiness, I'm not quite sure any of those would quite be the best solutions to this problem.

GOD

Ooh! Asteroid! Yeah, that'd do it. I know a guy in the Kuiper Belt. He owes me.

(SAINT PETER does not react to GOD's plan)

What?! What's the matter? Asteroid's perfect.

SAINT PETER

Far be it from me to question Your Holiness's wisdom. . .

GOD

Far be it.

SAINT PETER

I was thinking maybe more along the lines of a good talking to from Your Holiness. This species does have some redeeming qualities. Maybe they could be saved.

GOD

Saved? Did you see the Crusades? The Inquisition? Witch trials? The Holocaust? For shit stain's sake, did you see the Holocaust, Pete?

SAINT PETER

I have. However, maybe salvation for this species is still a possibility.

GOD

And maybe dog shit tastes like pumpkin pie. Doesn't mean I'm dialing up room service for Cool Whip.

(GOD leans back, yells up to the CEILING.)

Not that anyone seems to care what the lord almighty might want in this place.

SAINT PETER

You're thirsty. Let me dial you up that Coke Zero.

GOD

No. Nevermind the Coke Zero. This ends now. I am not putting my holy hiney on the line for these self-aggrandizing, self-important, self-seeking, self-entitled, self-consumed, self-centered flock of narcissistic fuck-ups. These people have pecked through my patience wall. Game, set, match. I'm out. They're done.

SAINT PETER

Let's just take a deep breath. Remember "deep breaths"?

GOD

I don't want to take a deep breath.

SAINT PETER

Now, we both know you just can't go kill everyone down there.

GOD

Why not? Says who?

SAINT PETER

You don't want to be like they are, do you? You want to be bigger than they are, right?

GOD (*calming*)

Well, maybe. I suppose.

GOD (CONT'D)
Wait. Oh, I get it. Yes, yes, yes – I see it now. You don't think I can pull it off, do you? This is a dare. Is this a dare? Are you daring me?

SAINT PETER
I would never question the wisdom of Your Holiness.

GOD
Enough! If you butter me up one more slice of that 'Your Holiness' Bread I'm gonna hit the roof. It's settled. My Asteroid Plan's divine, and we're going with it.

SAINT PETER
That is certainly an option.

GOD
Yes it is, isn't it?

SAINT PETER
But I do wonder what the Galactic Council would say if you suddenly reset the evolutionary dial on one of your field offices back to the land of gnats and rats? Wouldn't exactly be a resume builder, would it?

GOD
I guess. I just wish I could just fire everyone down there. Can't I do that? Wipe this one species out and start fresh? You know: new and improved. Wait. Can I fire everyone?

SAINT PETER
You could.

GOD
Great. Let's fire away.

SAINT PETER
However –

GOD
Ach, you and the "howevers"! I swear. We should start calling you Saint However.
(deep breath, calmer)
All right. Give me the "however".

SAINT PETER
It's true: you can pull the plug. You can up and leave everything and everybody behind.

GOD
Yes! Good! *However*!

SAINT PETER
However, there is a little matter of the DaVinci Clause.

GOD
The who-what, now?

SAINT PETER
The DaVinci Clause. You inserted into the bylaws after you sent Jesus down with the user's manual and the folks in the basement nailed him down and shipped him back. Frankly, we had all but forgotten about it until DaVinci rediscovered it. He's a bit of a nosy noodge, I'll admit. And, it is a rather arcane rule, but it is a rule, nonetheless.

GOD
So it's a rule. So what? I'm the boss. My heavens, my rules. I can do whatever I want.

SAINT PETER (*more frustrated*)
But it's *your* law. You'd be breaking *your own* rules!

GOD
Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa. Tone, Sainty P, tone. God don't cotton to your extra decibels. You feelin' me?

SAINT PETER
Well, I, well I was merely stating. . .I'm sure I didn't mean to, ah – I certainly didn't mean to offend.

GOD
Don't toot in your toga, Stammering Sam. I'm not gonna send you downtown to spend eternity as Satan's snuggle bunny. Although you know I could, just like that.
(GOD snaps his fingers)
And don't you forget it.
(beat)
So, what do we – wait: does my breath smell like nachos?
(GOD releases a lengthy exhale into SAINT PETER's face)

SAINT PETER (*doesn't flinch*)
Quite the contrary. It's heavenly.

GOD
Good.
(yells up to the ceiling)
God doesn't need a Coke Zero! Hear that?
(to SAINT PETER)
So, spill. What exactly do I have to do to get these jack-offs to stop hounding my ass for meaningless crap twenty-four-seven? And give it to me minus the shalt's and shant's and thou's and thee's. I want plain English.

SAINT PETER
Simply put, the DaVinci Clause states that god – that's you – can abandon the Earth if, and only if, every single inhabitant renounces his faith in your holiness. Not an unsubstantial task.

GOD
Wait. Are you telling me any half-assed schmuck who refuses to stop slinging fifty-cent prayers at me can sink my divine plan and cram my career in the crapper?

SAINT PETER
Everyone has to give up hope. It's the law. You're law.

GOD
Oh, yeah? Well, here's another fact hot off the presses: god's Divine Plan has changed.

SAINT PETER
Changed?

GOD
You heard me: changed, revised, adjusted, updated and upgraded. God's new Divine Plan is: "leave god the fuck alone."

SAINT PETER
I'm sorry. I'm not sure I quite heard you correctly.

GOD
You heard me fine. Unless everyone stops begging me to pull their ass out of the fire one more time, not a single one of them gets their ticket punched to the champagne room. We insert the standard fire-and-brimstone boilerplate – you know: "Anyone who disobeys. . .so sayeth the Lord. . .yada, yada, yada" – and , boom!, we're done.

(GOD stands and begins visualizing his plan. SAINT PETER doesn't move.)

Yes, yes, yes. "Leave god alone". Leave god alone or else. . .or else, what? Or else god will. . .

(GOD turns, sees SAINT PETER)

Are you still here? Go, go, go. Tick, tock. I ain't Job.

SAINT PETER
Now, your holiness, if I may, changing the Divine Plan is quite a massive undertaking that requires lots of, well, people and chisels and stones. H.R. will have to get involved. It's rather complicated.

GOD
Which is why you shouldn't be burdening my ass with idle chit-chat from the wings.

SAINT PETER

Not to mention reversing several thousand years of precedent – precedent you yourself set. Perhaps we should consider more of a velvet glove in place of the iron fist. A firm finger-wag from god could go a long way to forcing people to mend their ways.

GOD

All excellent points, P, but since I seem to recently recall something about a *directive straight from fucking God,* to change the Divine Plan. So, let's defer to his judgment, shall we? Get going. God's got ladders to climb.

SAINT PETER

As you wish.

GOD

We've got to move fast on this. People need to know I mean business. If they won't quit me, they need to know god's ready to crack open a can of ole-fashioned, oh-come-oh-ye-faithful, hell-on-Earth whoop ass.

SAINT PETER

You should know: their faith is strong.

GOD

Fuck that. This is G-Master G, yo. These people are no match for me. When I get done with 'em, they're gonna wish they never heard of me. It's time to stomp the yard!

SAINT PETER

Stomp the –? I'm not quite sure I follow.

GOD

Stomp the yard. . .you know.

SAINT PETER

I'm afraid I don't.

GOD

Neither do I. I picked it up at the conference.

SAINT PETER (*embarrassed for GOD*)

Oh.

GOD

They want us to try and stay relevant.

(beat)

Anyway, my point is: 'I'm gonna open up an ice-cream-truck full of hell on earth!

END SCENE ONE

ACT ONE
Scene Two

(LIGHTS UP on INTERIOR of the FERGUSON home. The space is plain: a sagging leather COUCH, a yard-sale T.V. STAND, and wobbly BOOKSHELF fill one space. On the wall above the BOOKSHELF is a framed PORTRAIT OF JESUS. On top of the BOOKSHELF are a group of lit TEA CANDLES. A small KITCHEN TABLE and two CHAIRS occupy the rest of the stage.

ENTER ISIAH FERGUSON, 20 years old. He has a DUFFEL BAG slung over his shoulder. He drops the bag into the corner. He takes off his JACKET and tries to cover the bag.

He moves to the REFRIGERATOR, pulls out a BEER, pops it open, sits at the KITCHEN TABLE and drinks. After a few beats he takes out his PHONE and sends a TEXT MESSAGE. He moves from the KITCHEN to the LIVING ROOM.)

ISIAH

Let's see:

(*He tosses a middle finger at the PORTRAIT OF JESUS.)*

fuck you false icon . .

(He wets his fingers, and extinguishes the CANDLES.)

. . .sayonara false hope. . .

(He fishes the REMOTE CONTROL from the COUCH cushions.)

. . .Hola, chattering box of idiots. . .and commence with suburban cherry on top.

(ISIAH raises his BEER in mock toast, then drains it. He aims the REMOTE CONTROL at the TV but is interrupted by a REPLY TEXT. He reads the TEXT, drops the REMOTE and marches over to his SUITCASE. He picks it up, stands for a few beats, then drops it. He goes to the KITCHEN, grabs another BEER, then clicks on the TV and sinks into the COUCH.)

NEWSCASTER

Day thirty seven. The heavens parted again today and god let it be known that, quote, "time was a-tickin'" and that he was prepared – again, quoting here – "to uncork a golden chalice of biblical whup-ass on the human race unless they leave me" – the 'me' being god – "the fuck alone." God also announced he had deleted his Facebook page.

God also announced that he no longer wants to be called god, or heavenly father, or your holiness, or supreme being. Instead he now wants to be called Joe – ordinary, bar-stool-cratering 'Joe'.

On the domestic front, the Bible Belt got a biblical bitch slap today when busloads of nuns, orphans and abandoned puppies simultaneously slammed into the remaining churches below the Mason-Dixon line, burning them all to the ground. The cause of these crashes is – well, I mean, seriously: do we really need to ask that question anymore?

NEWSCASTER (CONT'D)
In international news – Pope-Elect Mel Gibson was the sixth pontiff-to-be struck down in the last six days. Gibson was beset by a series of horrific boils. The weather forecast for Rome tomorrow calls for hail with heavy downpours of locusts.

ISIAH *(screams to the CEILING)*
Why don't you show your face? Coward!

NEWSCASTER
On a more conciliatory note, god did express his gratitude for the dramatic decline in prayers – and, again, these are god's words: ". . .people beseeching me for random, useless crap and personal bullshit favors."

(We hear the rattle of the key in the FRONT DOOR LOCK. ISIAH quickly moves to take his bag off stage, but as the door opens, the best he can do is cover it with his JACKET.

ENTER ISIAH'S MOTHER, REBECCA, mid 50s, and a bit hunched from carrying the world on her shoulders. She wears a ROSARY around her neck, and she is carrying TAKE-OUT FOOD in plastic bags.)

REBECCA
I've got food.

ISIAH
Please don't tell me it's –

REBECCA
Arby's.

ISIAH
Again? How is that possible?

REBECCA
It's the best I could do. It's Armageddon out there. Arby's is the only place where there's never a line.

ISIAH
Speaking of Armageddon: did you hear today's global warning?

REBECCA
No, and I don't want to.

ISIAH
It's a good one. Ooh, wait. They're gonna replay it again right now.

REBECCA

Turn that off.

ISIAH

C'mon! It's a good one! Mel Gibson gets boils!

REBECCA

I said turn it off, mister.

ISIAH

Fine.

(ISIAH clicks off the TELEVISION)

Click. Happy?

REBECCA

What's going on here?

ISIAH

What?

REBECCA

You look strange. Like you're up to something. What is it?

ISIAH

I'm fine. Everything's. . .fine.

REBECCA

Is that a beer you're drinking?

ISIAH

Yeah, so?

REBECCA

We talked about this. You are not twenty one, young man. Rules are rules.

(ISIAH tries to slug the BEER down; REBECCA rips it away from him.)

Did you snuff out my candles?

ISIAH

Snuff? No. They must've, whatchamacallit, died on their own.

REBECCA

Good thing I picked up more. Here.

(She hands ISIAH a bag of TEA CANDLES)

Put these new ones in and light them.

(ISIAH places the CANDLES on the BOOKSHELF but doesn't light them. REBECCA sets the table.)

ISIAH

I don't know why we keep doing this. It's a total waste of time.

REBECCA

Please don't ruin dinner.

ISIAH

It's Arby's. It comes pre-ruined.

(They sit, and REBECCA extends her hands to ISIAH to pray. ISIAH keeps his hands at his side.)

REBECCA

We're going to pray. Now give me your hands.

(ISIAH hesitates.)

Isiah Ferguson! Give me your hands!

(ISIAH reluctantly extends his hands to REBECCA. She takes them and starts to bow her head in prayer but stops short and flips ISIAH's hands over.)

What's this?

ISIAH

Nothing.

REBECCA

A tattoo? Don't you know that's the stupidest thing you can do? That's a mark you'll carry with you for the rest of your life.

ISIAH

Which – based on god's hissy-fit rate – should be about a week, give or take a plague.

REBECCA

Is that a horseshoe?

ISIAH

You've got rosary beads, I've got a horseshoe. What's the difference?

REBECCA

Why would you do such a thing?

ISIAH

Ever since god's clipped the leash, everyone's doing whatever they want. This is what I want.

REBECCA
Branding yourself with some superstitious symbol?

(ISIAH thumbs the ROSARY around REBECCA'S neck)

ISIAH
Pot calling kettle. Pot calling kettle. Come in, kettle.

REBECCA
What's gotten into you? Tattoos? Talking back? You can do better. I know you can.

ISIAH
For the first time I'm doing what I actually want. No one judging me. No one left on heaven and Earth cares. Why should I?

REBECCA
I care.

ISIAH
You shouldn't. How much more evidence do you need?

REBECCA
All this is a test. God is simply testing us. Testing our ability to believe in him.
(ISIAH LAUGHS)
He is!

ISIAH
You should be happy, ma. You used to have to die to know if you punched your Holy Roller ticket. Now all you have to do is flip on CNN to know what an asshole the attic dweller thinks you are.

REBECCA
That is enough!

ISIAH
It's not personal. Everyone's an asshole in his eyes. The only mystery left down here is why you're trying so hard to cozy up to the Holy Snubber.

REBECCA
I haven't given up hope.

ISIAH
Hope's a Tickle-Me-Elmo, mom. No one has it anymore. Give up. Everyone else has.

REBECCA

Maybe they've abandoned hope. But I can't. I won't. Just because we don't understand god's ways doesn't mean we should surrender. We're going to do what's right and pray.

(REBECCA takes ISIAH's hands)

Our father, who art in heaven. . .

ISIAH

Six popes dead, let's make it seven.

REBECCA

That's enough! As long as you live in this house, you will show some respect for the lord.

ISIAH

What are we even doing? You don't have to pray anymore. It's official: god hates us.

REBECCA

And I know I don't *have* to pray. I *want* to. And god does not hate us.

ISIAH

He just announced it on CNN! How many more popes and puppies does this guy have to put the pillow over before you figure it out?

REBECCA

Well, he didn't mean it. He was having a bad day.

ISIAH

Thirty seven straight?

REBECCA

He was –

ISIAH

Please don't say "testing us." You're worse than the Emergency Broadcast System.

REBECCA

Isiah, I have to believe in something bigger – grander – than myself. You should, too. If you can't have faith in a nobler purpose, what's the point of living?

ISIAH

Believing in yourself sounds like a fresh start.

REBECCA

Don't sass.

ISIAH

Mystery's over, ma. The Invisible Man behind the cumulous curtain has spent the last thirty-seven days pounding our toes with a ball peen hammer every time we try to spiritually spoon. God's not grand. He's not noble. He's just an old grump who wants us to get off his fucking lawn. When are you going to believe your own eyes and leave him alone?

REBECCA

What did I just say about language? I experienced an awakening through god. *That* was real. *He* was real.

ISIAH

You know what you are? You're a sinner.

REBECCA

I am no such thing. I am a devoted and faithful servant of the lord.

ISIAH

God's telling you to leave him alone, to stop believing in him – and you're straight up disobeying a direct order. You're the poster child for the Eternal-Damnation three-cent stamp.

REBECCA

Maybe god is confused. Maybe he's –

ISIAH

Testing us. Right.

REBECCA

I know this is hard, but god is challenging us to find our moral center, Isiah. We can't abandon our morals. We can't abandon god. I won't let you.

ISIAH

God's slurped down your devotion and vomited scotch all over it. But instead of letting go, you cling tighter. That's the definition of insanity.

REBECCA

That's not true. None of that's true. God rewards the faithful.

ISIAH

He does? Really? Where's your evidence?

REBECCA

You want black-and-white answers for god's actions? I don't have any. My faith is my answer.